

# SUMMER 2020 talkback

elha.com  
east lothian housing association

## When We Visit You



Now that Scotland has moved into a new phase, we have re-started home visits, where necessary. If we need to visit you, we will check with you in advance and ask if anyone in your home is unwell, or vulnerable, and ask if you are happy for us to enter your home. If you become unwell before the visit, please contact us and let us know.

### On the day we visit, there are a few things we need you to do:

1. Leave all internal doors open
2. Leave windows open for ventilation
3. Keep clear pathways within your home
4. Keep all areas well lit
5. Where possible, other occupants should vacate the property, or should all stay in one other room
6. All pets should be shut in another room

### Our staff will do the following for everyone's safety:

1. Ask questions from a safe distance, and where possible will do this from outside your home
2. Wash or sanitise their hands before and after visiting you
3. May wear a fresh pair of disposable gloves and or face mask when they visit you (these will be removed and disposed of safely after the visit)
4. Any equipment brought into your home will be disinfected before and after use
5. To minimise the amount of time spent in your home, where possible, notes and forms will be completed outside your home

We are complying with current Government guidance. Updates on this will be posted on our Facebook ([www.facebook.com/eastlothianhousingassociation](https://www.facebook.com/eastlothianhousingassociation)) page, and our News page on elha.com ([www.elha.com/news](https://www.elha.com/news))

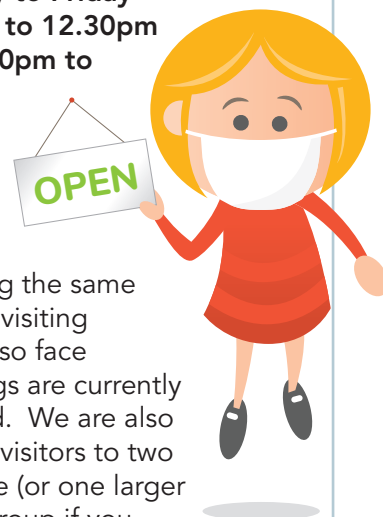


## Office Reopened

Our office reopened for visitors on 10 July 2020. We are operating slightly reduced opening hours to keep our staffing levels to a minimum whilst the majority of our office staff continue to work from home; these are as follows:

**Monday to Friday -  
9.30am to 12.30pm  
and 1.30pm to  
4.00pm**

Visiting our office means following the same rules as visiting a shop, so face coverings are currently required. We are also limiting visitors to two at a time (or one larger family group if you have children with you), and social distancing should be maintained. As much as we like seeing people, please only visit our office if necessary at the moment. Remember, it's usually quicker and easier to use your My Home account – just visit [elha.com](https://www.elha.com) to get started if you haven't already used yours.



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# Performance 365

For those of you who like to keep an eye on how we're doing, our annual performance figures are now up on Performance 365. And, as this is the second year we've been doing these figures, you're now able to compare this year's figures against last year more easily.

## A quick tour of the highlights:

- We have allocated 20 more properties this year than we did last year
- We got faster at doing repairs, and more of them are completed right first time
- Tenant satisfaction has improved (thank you for letting us know)
- Rent arrears have gone up (they had been going down all year, but March was a bit of a turbulent month! Our Regulator also changed how we calculate the arrears, so it's not an exact comparison)
- 68 tenants didn't let us in to do the annual gas servicing, which meant we had to force entry to their homes, to comply with the law
- We've added a feedback button on each Outcome so now you can tell us what you think or ask for more information

This is some of the same information we're giving to the Scottish Housing Regulator as part of our annual return to them, although we've given it to you first. If you would like the opportunity to make sure the numbers are accurate, please e-mail [info@elha.com](mailto:info@elha.com) to let us know. Our P365 Focus Group (formerly known as the 'Sticky Bun Focus Group') will be postponed this year, but if there's enough interest, we will organise an online meeting.

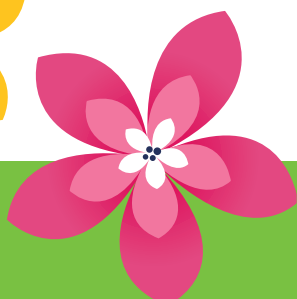
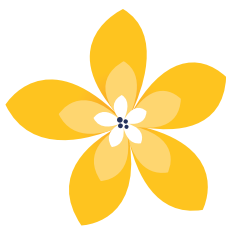
To have a look at this year's figures, go to Performance 365 at <https://performance365.elha.com> (or click on the silver performance button on the front page of elha.com)

## Open letter from the Minister for local Government, Housing and Planning to social housing tenants in Scotland

The Minister for Local Government, Kevin Stewart, has written an open letter to all our tenants. It helps set out how landlords and tenants should work together as we emerge from lockdown. We fully support this letter, and hopefully you will have seen from recent e-news and Newsflash articles that we have sent you, that we are already working in the ways set out in this letter.

(If you are not already signed up for e-news, please go to your My Home account and turn on paper-free services)

A copy of this letter can be found on the News page of [elha.com](http://elha.com).



# Consultation Calendar 2020/21

Consultation Name	Start date	Report to Committee
Communal Maintenance Survey	July 2020	August 2020
Garden Care Scheme Survey	September 2020	November 2020
Rent & Service Charges Annual Review*	January 2021	February 2021

Please note that we also run year-round satisfactions surveys on repairs\*, allocations\*, neighbour nuisance, the Money Advice service and complaints handling.

*\*Participation in these is required to qualify for Platinum Key Tenant Discounts*

## Anne to the Rescue!

Our Money Adviser, Anne Rattray, has been inundated with requests for help since lockdown started, and has been quietly working away, making things easier for our tenants. Even though she's extremely busy, she took the time to provide a case study, as an example of the work she's been doing:

I was sent a referral by the Housing Officer for a tenant who needed some financial help/advice. The tenant was a single parent with two young children. She was not working and in receipt of DWP benefits.

I arranged to call her to find out a bit more about her situation. It turned out that her electricity supply to her property had been disconnected a few months ago, as she had not topped up her prepayment meter. She now had an outstanding debt on the meter which she couldn't afford to pay. The tenant was very stressed and anxious with the situation she now found herself in. She did not know how she was going to get the electricity supply reconnected and was currently having to stay with a friend.

After spending time discussing her situation, I was able to contact Scottish Power on her behalf and they agreed to provide her with a credit so that she could top up the meter. She did this but was still left with a debt on the meter.

I then received an email from ELFIN (East Lothian Financial Inclusion Network) who had applied to

the Wellbeing Fund to set up a Fuel Poverty Grant Fund for families with children under 19 who may be struggling with increased fuel costs. ELFIN had been successful in their application and secured £20,000 to provide grants to families across East Lothian.

I completed an application on behalf of the tenant, and she was awarded a £100 grant to help with her fuel costs. This enabled her to clear the debt on her prepayment meter, get her electricity supply reconnected and move back into her home.

I also applied for a further 14 tenants. All the applications were successful, and they each received £100 grant payment towards extra fuel costs.



Even more impressive, when the tenant was contacted to ask if she minded being used for this case study, she made a point to thank Anne for also getting her a washing machine through the Scottish Welfare Fund!

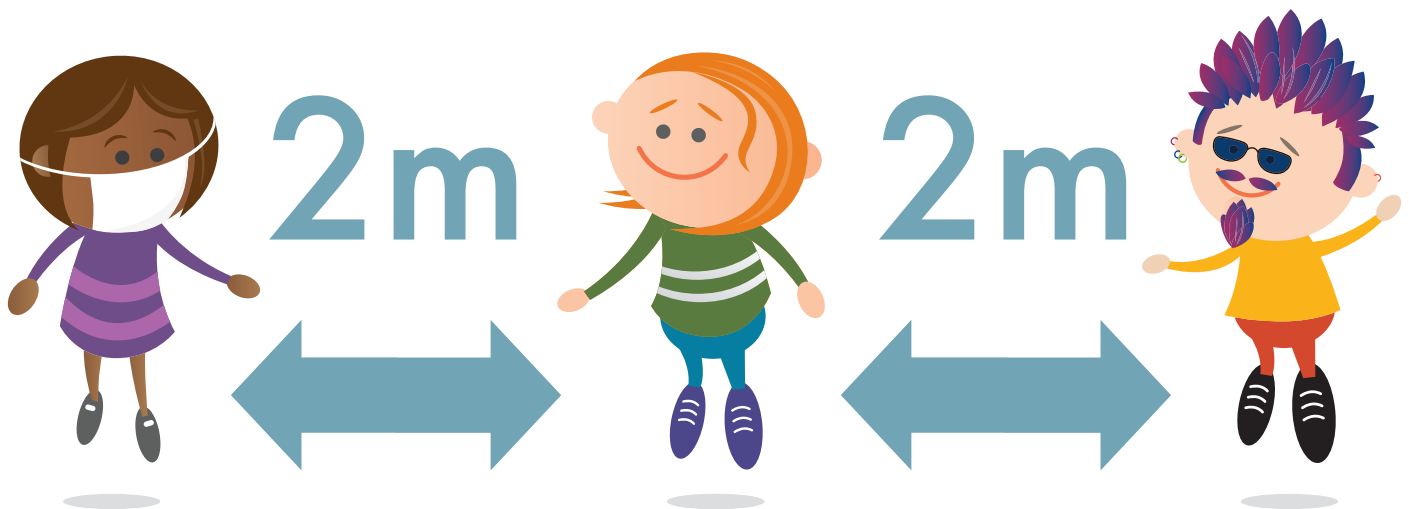
One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS) has secured additional funding for emergency energy grants for single parent families. This funding can only be applied for through Anne – to contact Anne, please use the 'Money Advice' help form in your My Home account, or phone our offices on 01620 825032 and select the rent query options to get through to someone who can arrange a money advice referral.

# Social Distancing

Social Distancing is hard, and understandably some may be starting to relax a little, but please respect other people's decision to remain safe. If you live in a communal stair, please do not invite friends or visiting family through that communal area unless they are taking sensible precautions, e.g. they should not be showing any symptoms, they should be covering their mouth and nose, and either using hand sanitiser, or single use gloves.

**And please remember – even if someone isn't showing symptoms, they can still be infectious.**

If you feel a neighbour is being reckless, please let them know calmly and politely that they're making you feel uncomfortable. We will consider verbal abuse, harassment and threats against tenants who aren't being careful in the same way we do all other antisocial behaviour. If you think you are in danger because of someone's lack of Social Distancing, you can report them to the Police. We cannot deal with breaches of Social Distancing in the same way that the Police can – we have no power to do anything other than treat it as a neighbour dispute whereas the Police can issue warnings and fines. If you prefer not to get the Police involved, we can offer a referral to the Resolution Service for mediation between you and your neighbour.



## Prize Draw Winners

Congratulations to Mr & Mrs Murray, from Haddington, Mrs Montgomery, from Wallyford, and Mr Anderson, from Stenton, who have each won £50 in our monthly repair survey prize draw.



## Tenant Satisfaction Survey Results

First of all, we're sorry it's taken so long to publish these figures – we've had them for a while and did intend to publish them in our last newsletter in April, but events overtook us a little!

Secondly, a big thank you to everyone who agreed to be interviewed and took part in the survey; over 700 of you gave your feedback on our services, and that's a fantastic result. The survey findings were given to our TIG over video conference last month.

The summary leaflet is enclosed with this newsletter, and the full report can be found on [elha.com](http://elha.com).

[www.elha.com/tss](http://www.elha.com/tss)

## Mutual Exchanges – Full Services Restored

We are now able to process any Mutual Exchange application we receive. But please remember that if an exchange involves another landlord, they might not yet be offering the same level of service. However, we know that our friends at East Lothian Council are also back to full Mutual Exchange services, so any proposed exchange with an East Lothian Council tenant should be able to go ahead if the application is approved. For more information or to look for an exchange, visit [www.elha.com/mutual-exchanges](http://www.elha.com/mutual-exchanges).

# Community Resilience

East Lothian can be very proud of its people – local residents have volunteered in huge numbers to join Community Resilience Teams. Below are some examples of the amazing work these teams have been doing:

- Walking dogs, collecting prescriptions, and doing supermarket runs for anyone shielding
- Collecting and distributing food and essentials donated by local companies
- Cooking and delivering meals across the county
- Providing emergency help for anyone who has run out of food or other essentials
- Delivering craft supplies to keep children and adults entertained
- Making up 'scrub bags' for NHS workers
- Setting up 'Whatsapp' emergency response teams
- And a lot more

If you would like to know what support is available in your area, or if you would like to volunteer, please contact your local Community Council for more information.

[https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210567/your\\_community/12158/community\\_councils](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210567/your_community/12158/community_councils)

(photos provided by George Robertson, Dunbar Community Council)



## Send Us Your Garden (photos)! Win Shopping Vouchers!

We didn't get to see your gardens blooming this year, so we're running an on-line gardening competition. Between now and the end of the month, we'd love to see photos of your gardens, flower beds, vegetable plots, even just a colourful hanging basket or pot plant you keep on your doorstep. You can even nominate your neighbour.

To enter, use the 'Send Documents' tool in your My Home account to upload your photos, with a note to say if the garden/pot is yours, a member of your household's, a communal garden you've brightened up, or if you want to nominate a neighbour. If you don't have a My Home account, email the photo to [info@elha.com](mailto:info@elha.com) or pop your photo in an envelope with your details.

(We will do our best to return your printed photos, but there's only essential staff in the offices at the moment, so we can't guarantee this). **Entries should be with us by 31 August 2020.**

Now that Hannah, our Estates Assistant, is able to get out and about a bit more, she will also be on the lookout for well-kept gardens whilst inspecting estates – they don't need to look like the Chelsea Flower Show, just neat and well-tended. Hannah will nominate a number of gardens to the TIG each week and we've set aside a few vouchers for the TIG to award for these too.



## Bins!

Ah, it wouldn't be a newsletter without an article on bins, would it? But did you know that recycling may save you money. How? Because, if you recycle properly, Waste Services can sell your rubbish, and that money can be used to cover some of the costs of collecting it, which may mean smaller Council Tax increases. The better quality your recycling is (i.e. no food in the paper bin), the more money they make, and that could mean an even smaller Council Tax increase.

So, recycle – it's in all our best interests!



Bins & Boxes	What goes in it	How often it's collected
Grey caddy	Food waste	Weekly
Blue box	Paper and cardboard	Every two weeks
Green box	Glass, cans and plastic	Every two weeks
Green bin	Household waste you can't recycle like waxed cardboard or polystyrene.	Every two weeks
Brown bin	Garden waste	Every four weeks

## Hope for the Best, Prepare for the Worst!

No one likes to think about getting older, but everyone should prepare for it to make sure the next of kin aren't left with having to sort out a messy tenancy end when their loved ones pass on or particularly should you be hospitalised and unable to return to your home.

What to do:

- Make sure we know who your next of kin is, and how to contact them – you can send us this information at any time via your My Home account
- If you want your next of kin to be able to manage your tenancy if you are incapacitated, send us a signed letter telling us you give your consent for us to share information with them (without it, we cannot speak to them on your behalf)
- If you're unable to use My Home, consider setting up a Friends & Family account, so a trusted member of your family, or other care giver, can manage your tenancy through your My Home account
- Consider setting up a Power of Attorney to allow a trusted person to make decisions on your behalf if needed.

If a tenant without a Power of Attorney is permanently hospitalised and cannot sign a form to end their tenancy, our only option is to take legal action to bring the tenancy to an end. This is a lose-lose situation, as the legal process can take months, rent continues to be charged even though the tenant isn't living there (which means Housing Benefit or Universal Credit can't be claimed to cover the rent), and court costs can add hundreds of pounds of unnecessary debt.

We do not want to ever have to do this to a family dealing with an ill relative, but it is the only legal way we have to end a tenancy if the tenant is incapacitated and there is no Power of Attorney in place.

So please make these simple preparations, just in case anything like this should ever happen to you.

